



National Commission *for*  
**Certification** *of*  
Anesthesiologist Assistants

# **Administrative Action & Appeals**

## **Certification Process for Anesthesiologist Assistants**

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## **NCCAA OVERVIEW**

The National Commission for Certification of Anesthesiologist Assistants (NCCAA) is a not-for-profit corporation organized under the laws of the state of Georgia. NCCAA certification provides assurances to the public that Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAA) possess the knowledge, skills and competency to practice as CAAs.

While individual states provide the legal credential for the practice of anesthesiologist assistants, private voluntary certification with the NCCAA indicates compliance with the professional standards for practice as an anesthesiologist assistant. The certification credential for anesthesiologist assistants has been adopted by many health care facilities, practice groups and health systems as a requirement for practice. The certification credential for anesthesiologist assistants has also been recognized in state medical practice acts as well as state administrative rules and regulations.

### **NCCAA Mission**

The mission of the NCCAA is to promote patient safety through certification programs which assess the knowledge, skills and competency of the anesthesiologist assistant and to instill lifelong learning through continuing education requirements.

### **History**

In 1989, a group of five anesthesiologists, two anesthesiologist assistants and one member of the public formed the National Commission for Certification of Anesthesiologist Assistants (NCCAA). Anesthesiologist Assistants had been in practice for a couple of decades. The need for independent credentialing of anesthesiologist assistants was deemed important to:

- Ensure the public of the training, knowledge and skill of anesthesiologist assistants.
- Protect the anesthesiologist assistants in practice by developing and ensuring standards for practice as an anesthesiologist assistant.

## Purpose

The purpose of the NCCAA is to ensure that CAAs have the necessary knowledge and skills to practice safely and effectively. In so doing, the NCCAA also protects the value of the CAA credential. The NCCAA is responsible for:

- Establishing and maintaining criteria for the earning of designation as a Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant, including requirements for initial certification and continued certification.
- Adopting and confirming compliance with initial and continued certification eligibility requirements for certified anesthesiologist assistants.
- Formulating, adopting, and confirming compliance with the requirements for eligibility for admission to NCCAA-administered examinations or assessments including, but not limited to, the NCCAA Certification Exam (CERT) and the NCCAA Continued Demonstration of Qualifications (CDQ) Exam.
- Developing, administering, scoring and analyzing the NCCAA examination in order to establish proficient applicants for the credential of Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant.
- Formulating, adopting and administering NCCAA-created examinations or assessments to candidates who have met all requirements for examination or assessment and have been found eligible.

No national organization can expect to determine the specific procedures that any individual CAA is qualified to perform. Nor can any national organization adequately determine whether an individual CAA may have developed an impairment that could interfere with the proper administration of anesthesia. Ultimately, these judgments must be entrusted to the individual CAA, to those with whom they work, and those that provide state licensing for CAAs. The NCCAA seeks to protect the public's interest by enacting a plan of certification and recertification on evidence of continued competence in providing anesthesia as indicated by participation in continuing medical education, substantiation of satisfactory performance, and undergoing periodic re-examination to confirm maintenance of current medical knowledge.

## Structure

The NCCAA Board of Directors is composed of certified anesthesiologist assistants who hold the NCCAA-issued credential of CAA, board certified physician anesthesiologists and representatives of the public.

## Communications

Five mechanisms are available for communicating with the National Commission:

- **Website:** [www.nccaa.org](http://www.nccaa.org)
- **Email:** [contact@nccaa.org](mailto:contact@nccaa.org)
- **US Postal Service:**  
  
NCCAA  
Box # 160  
8459 US HWY 42  
Florence, KY 41042
- **Phone:** 859-903-0089
- **Fax:** 859-903-0877

### Change of Address

The NCCAA maintains on file the mailing address of each applicant/candidate/practitioner as they submit it via the practitioner portal of the NCCAA website. **It is the responsibility of the applicant/candidate/practitioner to maintain accurate contact information, including address, email and telephone number, with the NCCAA by use of the practitioner portal available on the NCCAA website.**

The NCCAA will not make changes of address based on letterheads, return addresses on envelopes, plain text email requests, etc. The NCCAA will not be responsible for lost or missed communications due to failure by the applicant/candidate/practitioner to update the NCCAA of a change of address or contact information.

## **Change of Name**

The NCCAA maintains on file the name of each applicant/candidate/practitioner as they submit it via the practitioner portal of the NCCAA website. The name on file is used for communications, verification of certification, entrance to testing center, and other documents. **It is the responsibility of the applicant/candidate/practitioner to maintain accurate name information with the NCCAA by use of the practitioner portal available on the NCCAA website.**

A name change is a two-step process within the NCCAA website. Upon changing a name within the practitioner account, notification must be made via email to [contact@nccaa.org](mailto:contact@nccaa.org) before the change of name will appear on the certificate of certification.

The NCCAA will not make changes of names based on letterheads, return addresses on envelopes, plain text email requests etc. **The NCCAA will not be responsible for lost or missed communications due to failure by the applicant/candidate/practitioner to update the NCCAA of a change of name or contact information.**

## **Notification**

Communication from the NCCAA via telephone, email or US postal service shall be considered valid notification. The NCCAA will not be responsible for loss of communications by the US Postal Service, facsimile, email or electronic communication via the NCCAA website.

## **POLICIES FOR REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATION, ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION AND APPEALS**

Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAAs), exam candidates, and applicants for Certification or Continued Certification are subject to disciplinary or administrative action for engaging in conduct deemed by the NCCAA as inconsistent with NCCAA certification. These policies set forth the conduct that can lead to discipline, the procedures that will govern, the sanctions that may be imposed, the appeal rights of CAAs who are sanctioned, and provisions for reinstatement of NCCAA certification.

## Grounds for Revocation of Certification or Administrative Action

### Automatic Revocation of Certification

Any of the following will result in automatic revocation of certification or denial of certification:

- Loss or surrender of licensure or other authority to practice anesthesia, in any state for any reason that, in the judgment of the NCCAA, relates to the anesthesiologist assistant's safe or ethical practice of anesthesia.
- Adjudication by a court or a regulatory authority that the anesthesiologist assistant is mentally or physically incompetent to safely practice anesthesia.
- Suspension or termination from participation in a federal health care program for reasons relating to the unsafe, unlawful or unethical practice of anesthesia.
- Conviction of, or pleading no contest to, a crime that, in the judgment of the NCCAA, compromises the anesthesiologist assistant's safe or ethical practice of anesthesia.

### Discretionary Revocation of Certification

Any of the following developments may result in revocation of certification or denial of certification:

- Loss or surrender of licensure or authority to practice anesthesia, in any state for any reason other than retirement or cessation of practice unrelated to any disciplinary action or concern about possible disciplinary action.
- Conviction of, or pleading no contest to, a crime.
- Engaging in unethical conduct in the judgment of the NCCAA.
- Providing false or incomplete information to the NCCAA in connection with the certification process, including but not limited to application, examination and attestations.
- Dishonest or deceptive behavior related to any NCCAA examination or assessment, database, including individual profile, or intellectual property,

cheating on an NCCAA examination or assessment, inappropriate use of examination or assessment items, or assisting another individual to engage in any such conduct.

- Unauthorized use of the NCCAA credential or other health professional designation or false claim of certification or other professional designation.
- Violation of NCCAA policy or failure to cooperate with an NCCAA investigation or audit for purposes of certification.
- Any other conduct that, in the judgment of NCCAA, calls into question the ability of the anesthesiologist assistant to care for patients in a competent, forthright, and skillful manner.

### **Administrative Action**

Any of the following developments will result in administrative action:

- Failure to pay fees or other monetary obligations by the date due.
- Placement of any condition or restriction on licensure in any state.
- Failure to meet the eligibility requirements for continued certification.
- Failure to comply with requirements for continued certification unless a documented exception has been granted in advance by the NCCAA.
- Exhaustion of number of attempts allowed to successfully pass the NCCAA Certification or Continued Demonstration of Qualification Exams, as outlined in the respective handbooks.

### **Procedures for Revocation of Certification and Administrative Action**

Disciplinary or administrative action may be instituted based on information that the NCCAA learns through its own means or information that is brought to the NCCAA's attention by other concerned parties. Matters involving revocation of certification or administrative action will be reviewed in the first instance by NCCAA staff, with requests for review where provided for in these Policies by the Executive Committee of the NCCAA Board. NCCAA staff may elect to refer any matter to the Executive Committee of the NCCAA as an initial matter. Any final decision of the

Executive Committee may be subject to appeal, as described below in the section labeled "Appeal Request."

No one who is in professional competition with the anesthesiologist assistant whose conduct is under review or who has a personal relationship with such anesthesiologist assistant shall participate in any stage of the review or appeals process. If a member of the Executive Committee or NCCAA Board has a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest, the Chair shall demand their recusal from the matter. The Chair shall have the sole discretion to decide whether a conflict of interest, or the appearance of a conflict of interest, exists. If the Chair of the Board is in conflict, the Chief Executive Officer shall alert the Executive Committee and the Vice-Chair shall replace the Chair for purposes of these processes.

NCCAA staff will notify the anesthesiologist assistant of revocation of certification or administrative action and the reason for the revocation or administrative action by certified mail or by such other method as deemed appropriate by NCCAA staff. In kind communication shall be deemed appropriate. It is the responsibility of the anesthesiologist assistant to maintain current and accurate contact information with the NCCAA, including a current mailing address and email address. Notices, if mailed, will be issued to the address provided by the anesthesiologist assistant. The claim that an applicant or anesthesiologist assistant did not receive notice from the NCCAA will not excuse the individual from revocation of certification or from imposition of any other administrative action available under this policy, so long as the NCCAA sent notice to at least one of the addresses provided by the anesthesiologist assistant.

### **Automatic Revocation of Certification**

Any conduct resulting in automatic revocation of certification or administrative action will be addressed in the first instance by NCCAA staff. With respect to matters involving automatic revocation of certification or administrative action, NCCAA staff shall make a reasonable effort to ascertain the facts.

Following a reasonable review, if NCCAA staff conclude that there has been conduct warranting automatic revocation of certification or administrative action, NCCAA staff will recommend a sanction deemed just in the circumstances, up to and including revocation of certification. If the anesthesiologist assistant does not seek review by the Executive Committee within the timeframe required herein, then the recommended action, including revocation, shall become effective immediately.

NCCAA staff will notify the anesthesiologist assistant of any revocation of certification, or other recommended administrative action, and the reasons for the action by certified mail or other such method as NCCAA staff deems appropriate. In-kind communication shall be deemed appropriate.

An anesthesiologist assistant who believes any revocation of certification or other recommended administrative action is inappropriate may, within 30 business days after notification by the NCCAA, seek reconsideration by NCCAA staff to the extent there is novel information available to support the reconsideration. An anesthesiologist assistant who seeks reconsideration by NCCAA staff and who is not satisfied with the outcome may, within 30 business days after notification by NCCAA staff, seek review by the Executive Committee. An anesthesiologist assistant who does not desire to seek reconsideration by the NCCAA may seek review by the Executive Committee, if done so within 30 business days after notification by NCCAA staff.

Any request for reconsideration by NCCAA staff or review by the Executive Committee must be accompanied by a testamentary statement supporting the position of the anesthesiologist assistant. Any documentation the anesthesiologist assistant believes is in support of their statement should be included. Any request for reconsideration by NCCAA staff or review by the Executive Committee shall not be considered unless it is accompanied by such statement and supporting documentation. The statement must be in the form of a letter addressed to the NCCAA Executive Committee or NCCAA Board. It may be attached to an email, but email statements will not be considered.

Any request for review by the Executive Committee shall be accompanied by payment of an appeal review fee, in such amount established by the NCCAA Board of Directors. The current NCCAA Fee Schedule is located on the NCCAA website at: [www.nccaa.org](http://www.nccaa.org). Any final decision of the Executive Committee may be subject to appeal, as described below in the section labeled "Appeal Request." Any request for review by the Executive Committee shall not be considered by the Executive Committee unless it is accompanied by a testamentary statement, supporting documentation, and payment of the applicable appeal review fee.

### **Discretionary Revocation of Certification**

Any conduct of an anesthesiologist assistant that may result in revocation of certification or administrative action will first be reviewed by NCCAA staff. NCCAA

staff shall make a reasonable effort to ascertain the relevant facts.

If, after attempting to ascertain the facts, NCCAA staff determine that there is no basis for any action, the matter will be closed. NCCAA staff will retain a record of the information provided in the anesthesiologist assistant s (electronic only) file as this information may be reviewed in the case of a future disciplinary matter.

Following reasonable effort to ascertain the facts, if NCCAA staff conclude there is reason to believe conduct has occurred warranting disciplinary action, NCCAA staff will recommend an administrative action, up to revocation of certification, as deemed just under the circumstances.

If the anesthesiologist assistant does not seek NCCAA staff reconsideration or review by the Executive Committee within the timeframe required herein, then any recommended administrative action, including revocation, shall become effective immediately. NCCAA staff will notify the anesthesiologist assistant of any revocation of certification or other recommended administrative action and the reasons for the action by certified mail or other such method as NCCAA staff deem appropriate.

Any request for review by the Executive Committee shall be accompanied by payment of an appeal review fee, in such amount established by the NCCAA Board of Directors. The current NCCAA Fee Schedule is located on the NCCAA website [www.nccaa.org](http://www.nccaa.org). Any final decision of the Executive Committee may be subject to appeal, as described below in the section labeled "Appeal Request." Any request for review by the Executive Committee shall not be considered by the Executive Committee unless it is accompanied by a testamentary statement, supporting documentation, and payment of the applicable appeal review fee.

### **Executive Committee Review and Hearing**

If a timely request for review by the Executive Committee is received from an anesthesiologist assistant or NCCAA staff, the Executive Committee shall set a date, time and location for a hearing. The hearing shall be by telephone unless the Executive Committee, in its sole discretion, chooses another method. All expenses of the anesthesiologist assistant in connection with any review by the Executive Committee shall be borne by the anesthesiologist assistant.

The Executive Committee shall consider the notice of adverse decision and/or the request for review from NCCAA staff, including any supporting documentation

submitted by the anesthesiologist assistant or prepared by NCCAA staff. The Executive Committee also may, at its discretion, request and/or review additional information. All documents reviewed shall constitute the Record of Review. A copy of the Record of Review shall be forwarded to the anesthesiologist assistant at least 10 business days before the meeting of the Executive Committee.

At the Executive Committee hearing, the anesthesiologist assistant may present their position or have that presentation made by counsel. Neither the anesthesiologist assistant nor anesthesiologist assistant counsel may call or cross-examine witnesses or take any action other than to present the anesthesiologist assistant's position to the Executive Committee or to answer questions presented by that Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall determine the time allotted for presentation before the Executive Committee by, or on behalf of, the anesthesiologist assistant.

The formal rules of evidence present in judicial proceedings shall not apply to the hearing before the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall be allowed to consider any information the Executive Committee deem relevant to the investigation.

The Executive Committee, through NCCAA staff, shall notify the anesthesiologist assistant of its decision in writing by certified mail or by such other method as the Executive Committee deems appropriate. The notification shall include the administrative action imposed, if any, and a statement of the reasons for the decision. It shall remind the anesthesiologist assistant of their right to request an appeal within 30 business days after notification of the decision. If the anesthesiologist assistant fails to request an appeal within the timeframe required, then the imposed sanction shall become effective immediately. If a timely appeal is requested, the imposed administrative action shall not become effective until a final decision is reached by the NCCAA Board of Directors. The stay of administrative action for appeal is not applicable to conduct by an anesthesiologist assistant who is subject to automatic revocation of certification.

Following a hearing, if the Executive Committee determines the anesthesiologist assistant has not engaged in any conduct in violation of this NCCAA policy, it shall close the matter. A record of the matter and the Record of Review shall be maintained in the file of the anesthesiologist assistant indefinitely.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS**

The administrative actions for conduct deemed to warrant action include the following:

### **No Action**

While there has been conduct in violation of this NCCAA policy, no action is to be taken. A record of the matter will be retained in the anesthesiologist assistant's file and may be referred to in the future should another matter involving NCCAA policy arise.

### **Letter of Concern**

The NCCAA will issue a Letter of Concern to the anesthesiologist assistant if conduct in violation of NCCAA policy has occurred and the conduct does not rise to the level of severity warranting revocation of certification. The NCCAA will not report a Letter of Concern to any licensing board or other authority. The Letter of Concern shall remain in the anesthesiologist assistant's file. Reviews of behavior will consider letters of concern if future behavior warrants discipline.

### **Revocation of Certification**

The NCCAA will revoke the certification of the anesthesiologist assistant when the conduct of the anesthesiologist assistant calls into question the integrity of the anesthesiologist assistant or the anesthesiologist assistant's ability to provide safe quality anesthetic care. Additionally, conduct previously noted in this policy and repeated below may result in revocation of certification.

#### **A. Automatic Revocation of Certification**

Any of the following will result in automatic revocation of certification or denial of certification:

- Loss or surrender of licensure or other authority to practice anesthesia, in any state for any reason, in the judgment of the NCCAA, relates to the anesthesiologist assistant's safe or ethical practice of anesthesia.

- Adjudication by a court or a regulatory authority that the anesthesiologist assistant is mentally or physically incompetent to safely practice anesthesia.
- Suspension or termination from participation in a federal health care program for reasons relating to the unsafe, unlawful or unethical practice of anesthesia.
- Conviction of, or pleading no contest to, a crime that in the judgment of the NCCAA, compromises the anesthesiologist assistant's safe or ethical practice of anesthesia.

#### **B. Discretionary Revocation of Certification**

Any of the following developments may result in revocation of certification or denial of certification:

- Loss or surrender of licensure or authority to practice anesthesia, in any state for any reason other than retirement or cessation of practice unrelated to any disciplinary action or concern about possible disciplinary action.
- Conviction of, or pleading no contest to, a crime.
- Engaging in unethical conduct in the judgment of the NCCAA.
- Providing false or incomplete information to the NCCAA in connection with the certification process, including but not limited to application, examination, and attestations.
- Dishonest or deceptive behavior related to any NCCAA examination or assessment, database, including individual profile, or intellectual property, cheating on an NCCAA examination or assessment, inappropriate use of examination or assessment items, or assisting another individual to engage in any such conduct.
- Unauthorized use of the NCCAA credential or other health professional designation, or false claim of certification or other professional designation.

- Violation of NCCAA policy or failure to cooperate with an NCCAA investigation or audit for purposes of certification.
- Any other conduct that, in the judgment of NCCAA, calls into question the ability of the anesthesiologist assistant to care for patients in a competent, forthright, and skillful manner.

The NCCAA, at its sole discretion, may select a specific period of time during which the anesthesiologist assistant shall not be eligible to reapply for certification. Should the NCCAA revoke certification due to conduct not in accordance with these policies, the NCCAA will report the action to the applicable state boards, licensing authorities, the National Practitioner Data Bank, federal government payor programs, the anesthesiologist assistant's employer, and other interested parties as known and appropriate.

## **Other Actions**

The NCCAA may require certain measures to be met by the anesthesiologist assistant to reapply for certification. Examples include rehabilitation course for substance abuse, reexamination, or a practical skills course. Further, the NCCAA shall use all means necessary to protect NCCAA intellectual property rights, including all available legal remedies, for appropriation, use or distribution of NCCAA intellectual property.

## **APPEAL REQUEST**

If an anesthesiologist assistant receives notification of a decision by the Executive Committee that the anesthesiologist assistant deems adverse, they may request an appeal to the NCCAA Board of Directors by filing a Request for Appeal with the NCCAA within 30 business days after notification of the decision of the Executive Committee. Any Request for Appeal shall be accompanied by payment of an appeal fee in such amount set by the NCCAA Board of Directors and found within the NCCAA fee schedule located on the NCCAA website at [www.nccaa.org](http://www.nccaa.org). A Request for Appeal shall stay the effective date of the administrative action except in cases of immediate revocation of certification imposed secondary to:

### **Automatic Revocation of Certification**

Any of the following will result in automatic revocation of certification or denial of certification:

- Loss or surrender of licensure or other authority to practice anesthesia, in any state for any reason that, in the judgment of the NCCAA, relates to the anesthesiologist assistant's safe or ethical practice of anesthesia.
- Adjudication by a court or a regulatory authority that the anesthesiologist assistant is mentally or physically incompetent to safely practice anesthesia.
- Suspension or termination from participation in a federal health care program for reasons relating to the unsafe, unlawful or unethical practice of anesthesia.
- Conviction of, or pleading no contest to, a crime that in the judgment of the NCCAA, compromises the anesthesiologist assistant's safe or ethical practice of anesthesia.

A Request for Appeal shall include a statement from the anesthesiologist assistant explaining the position of the anesthesiologist assistant's belief that the Executive Committee decision was in error. The statement must include any documents or other materials the anesthesiologist assistant believes support the Request for Appeal. A Request for Appeal not received within 30 business days of the Executive Committee decision, or not accompanied by the review fee, shall not be forwarded to the NCCAA Board of Directors and the decision of the Executive Committee shall constitute the final decision of the NCCAA on the matter.

## **APPEAL PROCESS**

When the NCCAA Board of Directors receives a Request for Appeal, it shall, at its sole discretion, determine whether to require all submissions be made in writing or to hold a telephonic hearing or other such means of a hearing. The NCCAA Board of Directors will notify the anesthesiologist assistant requesting appeal in writing by in-kind communication or certified mail to the address in the anesthesiologist

assistant's NCCAA profile, of the date of hearing or, in the alternative, the date that all written submissions are due.

Should the NCCAA Board of Directors decide in rare circumstances to hold an in-person hearing, the NCCAA Board of Directors will determine the date, time and location of such hearing. All expenses of the anesthesiologist assistant in connection with any appeal shall be borne by the anesthesiologist assistant.

At the NCCAA Board of Directors' appeals hearing, the anesthesiologist assistant may present their position or have that presentation made by counsel. The anesthesiologist assistant and/or anesthesiologist assistant counsel may **NOT**:

- Call or cross-examine witnesses.
- Take any action other than to present the anesthesiologist assistant's position to the NCCAA Board of Directors.

The anesthesiologist assistant and/or the anesthesiologist assistant counsel **may only** answer questions presented by the NCCAA Board of Directors. The NCCAA Board of Directors shall determine the time allotted for presentation before the NCCAA Board of Directors by, or on behalf of, the anesthesiologist assistant.

The formal rules of evidence present in judicial proceedings shall not apply to the hearing before the NCCAA Board of Directors. The NCCAA Board of Directors shall be allowed to consider any information the NCCAA Board of Directors deem relevant to the investigation.

Following the appeals hearing or appeals review of written submissions, the NCCAA Board of Directors shall determine whether to affirm, modify, or reverse the decision of the Executive Committee or to remand the matter to the Executive Committee for further review and proceedings. The decision of the NCCAA Board of Directors shall be based on whether the decision of the Executive Committee was procedurally fair and supported by the evidence.

Should the NCCAA Board of Directors become aware of new applicable evidence, it may discontinue its appeal review and remand the matter back to the Executive Committee for further consideration.

The NCCAA Board of Directors shall notify the anesthesiologist assistant of its decision in writing, by such method as the NCCAA Board of Directors deems appropriate.

Unless the NCCAA Board of Directors has remanded the matter for further review by the Executive Committee, the decision of the NCCAA Board of Directors shall be final.

## **REINSTATEMENT SUBSEQUENT TO REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATION OR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION**

An anesthesiologist assistant who has had their certification revoked for a specified period of time may reapply to the NCCAA following expiration of such time.

An anesthesiologist assistant who has had their certification revoked because of a loss of licensure or a condition or restriction placed on their licensure may submit a written request for reinstatement of certification to NCCAA staff after their license has been reinstated, or after all conditions and restrictions on licensure have been met with the only remaining condition for licensure to be acquisition of NCCAA certification.

An anesthesiologist assistant who has had their certification revoked based on conviction of, or pleading no contest to, a crime, may not apply for reinstatement of certification until all sentences have been served, including probation, and all judgments have been satisfied. There is no guarantee the certification will be reinstated.

Except as specified above and except in cases in which an administrative action expressly conditions reinstatement on the achievement of certain conditions or the passage of specific amounts of time, an anesthesiologist assistant may apply to NCCAA staff for reinstatement at any time. Applications for reinstatement shall be considered and ruled upon at the sole discretion of the NCCAA. A re-entry or reinstatement fee shall apply.